

WASHINGTON, D. C. SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1912.

# "A BUTTERFLY ON THE WHEEL"

A Story for the Married and Those Who  
Expect to Be, Written from the Great Play  
of the Same Title. :: :: ::

## CHAPTER III—Continued.

"Oh! You'd—rather—die," he repeated, mechanically. Then, turning, he walked slowly to the sofa and sank onto it, and buried his face in his hands. In a few moments she raised her head and looked at him. His breath came and went with a sharp hissing sound and his shoulders heaved as the waves of passion shook him like storm waves racking a stranded ship. Her lips trembled, and suddenly her whole heart went out to him in a rush of tenderness and sympathy. In an instant she was on her knees beside him.

"Please, Collingwood, don't do that!" she pleaded, tearfully. "I can't bear that you should think me unkind! I like you too well to let you do anything that would spoil our happiness. I'm not unkind. Really, I'm not! Haven't I shown how fond I am of you? And we have been such friends!"

"Friends!" he groaned, bitterly. "But, Collingwood, dear, what else can we be?"

He drew away from her sharply and stood up. She rose and gazed at him anxiously.

"We have passed the mere friendship line," he said, in a hard voice. "You know that! You would not have left London with me had we been merely friends. Were we merely friends when we sat up night after night at Ellerdine's place? No friends speak to one another as we have spoken? Why? His teeth closed as his passion swept again. "You've only to touch my hand to know that I burn with longing!"

"Collingwood, you must not say such things!" she begged. She was thoroughly frightened. She had hunted the wolf and roused the lion.

"Friends!" He flung the word back at her again. "It's not true! Look at the risks we have taken! Do friends run the risks we have run? Why, we haven't even tried to fool the world! So, for heaven's sake, don't let's try to fool ourselves!"

Peggy gasped. "People don't think we are—"

"People don't think!" he laughed bitterly. "My darling, people are only too glad to think. You know what is said about others—"

"Oh!" she gasped. He turned to her quickly, his tone and manner softened.

"Peggy, you don't care, do you?"

"Don't care!" her fingers gripped the edge of the table and she strove to speak calmly. "Collingwood, tell me, do people think we are lovers?"

"How can they help thinking it?" he demanded. "Haven't we given them every reason?"

Peggy choked back a scream of horror. "No, no, no!" she gasped. "Oh, I hate to think of that! We have only been friends—very kind friends—"

she went on feverishly, as if it were necessary only to convince him. "Why should they think otherwise? Oh, I suppose it's all my fault—all my fault! I don't think ungenerous things of others. I only wanted a companion—a good friend!"

She sank sobbing into a chair and flung herself against the table in a pitiful little heap. Collingwood came and stood over her, but there was no tenderness or sympathy in the gaze that rested on her bowed head. The love of his life had been played with for the amusement of a butterfly, and the bitterness of it welled up to his lips.

"You wanted some one to pet you—to pamper you," he said in low, hard tones. "Some one to satisfy all your little vanities—your yearnings for devotion, adulation. I know. You wanted all the joys and none of the risks! There are many women like you. They drive men mad—make them drunk with bladders of them! But I'll not let you drive me mad!" and his teeth clicked. "Peggy, I mean you to be mine! There will be a crash soon. Adamston will take notice of what people are saying about us. He will come out of his political shell and end it once and for all!"

"Oh! what have I done!" moaned the girl.

"Done!" echoed Collingwood, with a swift change of tactics. "What have you done to deserve his neglect? Why, he doesn't even know you exist! Why, his heart beats by act of Parliament! He'd rather rant at a village meeting than pass an hour with you! Are you going to spend your youth in the company of—"

"Stop! Stop!" Peggy broke in, rising, white-faced and imperious. "Say what you like about me—scold me as you like, but don't say one word against him. You don't know him. He is a big man and he loves me."

"In a stride he was beside her, gazing earnestly into her face.

"But Peggy," he said, "you won't say you love him."

"Love him! Oh, I don't know!" she said pathetically, and turned away from him. "I've no chance to love anybody the way you regard love. It was my father who wished me to marry Adamston, even before I left school. So, you see I've had no chance to love any one the way you regard love."

"You mean you do not love Adamston and you won't love only one else?" he interrogated.

"I don't know," she repeated in a weary little voice. "But I certainly don't love any one else. You think I'm neglected—that is absurd. She drew herself up. "George knew I did not love him—he trusts me fully. There will be no crash!"

"There will be!" You take my word for it," he insisted earnestly. "No man—not even Adamston—can stand ridicule for long. Remember, Peggy, I mean to win! I shall marry no one if I don't marry you."

Peggy laughed, clearly and naturally, and moved over to him with one of those sudden shifts of mood that were the most maddening of her charms.

"Collingwood, don't be silly!" she chided, gently. "You are one of the best matches in England. You will marry some beautiful girl who will lead society and make you a proud, ambitious man."

He turned away with an impatient gesture.

"You shake your head," Peggy went on with a smile. She was beginning to feel very motherly as the moment of danger passed. "That is only because you want to be brilliant. Heaven! if I were a man I could do things!"

She turned and looked at him with a smile.

"You're mad about position!" he exclaimed bitterly.

"Yes, I like men who do things," said Peggy. She had recovered her confidence. The bug had ceased to bite and sting. It would be interesting to watch it in the throes of a few more struggles. "All women worth their salt like men who have some purpose in life and who fight the world and win."

"Like George Adamston," suggested Collingwood with a touch of irony.

"Yes, he's a fighter, Colling," she replied, seriously. "I think many women would love George. He's not like other men but—"

"But he has all the luck!" Collingwood broke in bitterly. "I could do anything if you were with me! I must have something or some one to fight for. Peggy, you must let Adamston get a divorce. He finished in grim earnest. Peggy sank into a chair with a gasp.

"Divorce! Oh, you must not talk like that! You don't know how it hurts me. Really, you're mistaken," she went on earnestly. "I'm quite satisfied with my life—only sometimes when I'm foolish I feel a little lonely and neglected."

"Then you have deceived me," he charged.

"Collingwood, I never meant—"

"Never meant! Good heavens!" Collingwood blazed out. "I told you six months ago that I loved you! And ever since then you have let me go everywhere with you and I've told you again and again of my love!"

Peggy's lips trembled and she half raised her arm as if to shield herself from the outburst.

"You have always been so good to me," she said pathetically. "You've never been unkind before."

Collingwood fairly sprang toward her.

"Good! Unkind! Why, most men would have divorced their wives on far less than half the evidence we have furnished! And you have accepted that position without a murmur! You don't know what you've done!"

Peggy's eyes were wide with terror. "Collingwood, what do you mean?" she cried.

"Mean! I mean that you've led me to believe that you didn't care what we did—what people said about us! Mean! That we are alone together, Peggy, you and I!" His voice was low and tense and the words tumbled out over each other in a passionate whirl. That the call of love is in the spring, whispering to you and me! Mean! That I am a man and you are a woman, whose souls stand bared to each other! That I love you and you love me!"

And again she was crushed to his breast.

"I don't love you Colling! Let me go!" she panted and writhed herself loose. Then she sank limply onto the sofa. She felt strangely weak. It was as if she were being robbed of the power of resistance—as if the sheer strength of the passion were overwhelming her. In an instant he was beside her and had her in his arms again.

"No, I can't let you go," he whispered between his clenched teeth as he strained her to him. "It is my hour! It's your fault as well as mine! Kiss me, Peggy. You've tormented me long enough. Kiss me!"

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One arm turned and her scarce resisting face came up to his. His lips crushed her in a long fierce kiss. The telephone bell jangled loudly.

"Ellerdine!" she gasped.

"Let him ring!" And he kissed her again, in spite of her terrified struggles.

"No, no!" she panted. "Answer him! Please—please!"

She broke out of his embrace, and with a growl of anger he rose and hurried to the phone.

"Well, well, who is it," he demanded testily. "What-a-l!" He hastily pressed the mouthpiece to his shirt bosom.

"Ad-Adamston!" he whispered. And for once in his life Collingwood was really frightened.

"My husband!" gasped Peggy, starting to her feet.

"Yes—yes, we took the wrong train," Collingwood was saying into the phone.

"Yes, Collingwood. It's speaking."

Peggy's lips were stiff with terror. "Where is he?" she managed to whisper, but Collingwood motioned to her to be quiet.

"Oh, yes," he went on in a natural tone. "We have just finished supper. What! I can't hear distinctly. You want to speak to—Oh, to Ellerdine! Wait, I'll tell him."

He put down the receiver and turned to Peggy. He was very pale, but his eyes were shining.

"He wants to speak to you, too," he said in a low voice. "Perhaps you'd better not."

Peggy shuddered and buried her face in her hands.

"I can't! I can't!" she moaned. He picked up the phone again. "Where is he, London?" whispered Peggy.

"I didn't think to ask—Hullo! Ellerdine has just gone out," he went on into the phone. "Hullo! Where are you? Speaking from—Damn! We're cut off! Hullo! Dites donc, madamoielle, ne coupez pas mon numero, je ne pas fini—It's no use—we're cut off. And he slammed the instrument onto the table.

Peggy faced him, livid with fear. "Oh, this is fearful," she moaned. "How did he know we were here?"

"Collingwood started and bit his lip. "I never thought of that!" he exclaimed. "Can he have had us?" He left the sentence unfinished as a terrible suspicion flashed across his mind.

"What! What?" sobbed Peggy, hysterically.

"Followed!" he muttered, and paused again. "Peggy! Rumor—he has been ridiculed into action. Peggy, the crash has come!" he declared solemnly.

But Peggy was beyond coherent thought or speech. She leaned against the mantel, her eyes closed, her breath coming in quick gasps—stricken even beyond tears.

"Go! Go!" she begged. "I shan't speak another word—to you—to-night."

Collingwood fairly ran to her. "No, No! I can't leave you now!" he exclaimed passionately. "Peggy, I won't leave you!"

Her hand feebly sought the push-button, just beyond her reach at the end of the mantel.

"I shan't ring—for my maid," she said, weakly.

"No, don't do that! Don't be cruel,"



He crushed her violently to him despite her struggles.

Peggy! No, no! Don't ring!" he pleaded, as her hand at last found the button. "Peggy, trust me! I love you better than anything else in the world! For you I will sacrifice wealth, honor!"

"Honor!" she moaned.

"I'll do anything to win you!" he went on desperately. "Everything I've done has been to win you—to have you for my own! You know it's true. Before God, I believed you loved me, too, Peggy! Don't judge me too harshly, dear! Don't!"

He attempted to take her in his arms again, but she pushed him off.

"I must be alone," she said, faintly. He stepped back with a sigh.

"All right, Peggy. At the door he paused a moment. "Don't be afraid, dear," he said, tenderly. "It will all come right. Good night, Peggy."

The door had scarcely closed behind him before Pauline stumbled, white-faced, into the room.

"Oh, madame!" she cried. "There is something altogether wrong! Just now when I came along I saw a man standing at your door listening! Twice before I have seen him to-day. He was at Boulogne!"

Peggy's overwrought nerves gave way in a storm of weeping and she threw herself upon Pauline's motherly bosom.

"Oh, Pauline, I feel that something awful is going to happen!" she sobbed. "Stay with me! Don't go back to your room! Stay with me, stay with me! Pet me as you used to when I was little and afraid of the dark!"

Three travelers with strangely assorted poses were hurrying through the night to be at Peggy's side in the morning.

In a corner of a compartment on the slow train from Chalons Lord Ellerdine, vexed of thought and sore of body, snored disconsolately. His companion's thoughts must have been pleasant for she sat up beside him, and occasionally smiled enigmatically into the darkness.

The last express from London was bringing the third. He, too, sat up wide awake, and stared right ahead of him over the Paris road with burning eyes. Buttoned against his breast was a short, unsigned letter, every word of which was seared into his memory. And his heart was a fire of hell that he had lit from the debris of the wreck of his love and trust in a woman.

Lord Ellerdine alighted from the Chalons train in even a worse frame of mind than had accompanied him aboard. His mind was small, but contrary to the rule of physics it moved slowly. He could never cling to but one idea at a time, but he clung to that tenaciously—unless it demanded anything of his memory. He was good-natured, fatuous and about forty. For a time he threatened to shine in the diplomatic corps because he was so resourceful an ass that his opponents gave him credit for the deepest guile.

But his inability to handle more than one idea at a time ruined him, and his masters were unkind enough to forget that but for men of Dicky's type the British Empire might never have been.

He would have been a hero in the old Continental wars. Dicky, as he was called, would have been a hero in the old Continental wars. Dicky, as he was called, would have been a hero in the old Continental wars.

"Look, of it! Pooh!" she exclaimed, with light scorn. "It is merely a frolic and a trifle. Collingwood is not the man to run risks. He believes in the simple life." And she smiled a little.

"Does he?" commented Dicky, grimly. "No, no, no! He's not so simple as to get into a

complication with Adamston," rejoined the lady, decidedly. "He's no fool—you take my word for it."

"Seems to me I have to take your word for everything," he complained.

"Well, you will leave all the thinking to me," she smiled.

"You don't give me time to think," he replied in an aggrieved tone. "I know I'm turned slow at it. But tell me this—"

He turned his head enough to meet her glance. "How did Peggy and Collingwood get to my place last autumn before to clock in the morning?"

Tell me that—what?"

He settled back as if conscious that he had delivered a facer.

"Motored through the night," replied the lady, promptly and coolly.

"They didn't—um—they didn't!" exclaimed Dicky in mildly triumphant tones.

"But he told us they didn't."

"I know he did but they didn't."

She gazed hard at him. "Dicky, you know something," she declared. "He had resumed his sour scrutiny of the ceiling."

"I know I do."

"What is it?" she demanded.

"Bad breakdown overnight at Selby," he explained, shortly. "They came on to my place the next morning in a hired motor. I heard all about it from the man who drove them down from Selby."

"Dicky!"

"It's a fact. Fellow is my chauffeur. So you see I can find out things if I have time enough. Alice?"

He squirmed uncomfortably. "I don't like this fix Peggy's in. Staying all night at Selby with Collingwood was bad enough, but—"

"Good gracious!" snapped Lady Attwill so sharply that Dicky almost started. "Can't a woman stay at the same hotel with a man she knows without scandal?"

"Scandal!" echoed Dicky, sitting up in a manner which was, for him, sudden. "Damn the scandal! It's what folks think—it's who you are! Lots of women wouldn't mind staying at the same hotel I was staying at, and nobody would dream there was anything wrong—wouldn't, Alice. But Peggy and Collingwood make people suspect 'em!"

"Madame will see Lady Attwill," interrupted Pauline's respectful voice from the doorway of the bedroom.

"Tell Peggy I'm waiting," requested his lordship, as Lady Attwill hastened toward the door.

"Yes, Amuse yourself for a few minutes," she smiled with a nod toward Pauline.

"Amuse! What!" said Dicky with a blank stare. Then his face lit up with a smile of comprehension. "Oh, yes! Morning, Pauline. How is madame?"

"Oh, a headache—just a little nervous. Is your lordship well, injured the maid, respectfully."

He shook his head and made a very face. "Had no sleep. Feel very groggy. Pauline. Up all night in a confounded slow train. Oh, there you are!" he added in an altered tone as Collingwood, clean shaven and neat in a brown sack suit stepped in from his own apartment.

"Hello, Ellerdine!" returned the other cheerfully. "Bright and early, as usual."

"Early, yes," said his lordship grimly.

ly, "but not so deuced bright, only chap."

Collingwood sat on the arm of the sofa and lit a cigarette. "When did you get here?" he inquired pleasantly, ignoring Ellerdine's manner, which was rapidly becoming forbidding.

"About 5 o'clock?"

"Had breakfast?"

"No; had a bath, a shave, and a change."

"Refreshing, but not filling," commented Collingwood.

"Staying here?"

"No, they wouldn't let us in. It's race day—or week—they're packed so we had to go to the St. Denis. A nice fix you got us all into," Ellerdine added coldly.

"Fix. I've got you into. How so?" And he walked over to Dicky's chair and looked down at him. His lordship deigned not to glance at him.

"I'm blown if I know—quite," he said in the same uncompromising tone. "Anyway, we're in it."

"But I don't understand," protested the other.

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Dicky, between annoyance and disgust. "Chuck that business, Colling. I know your beastly way of putting a fellow off—but you can't leave me out of this."

"Leave you out?" frowned Collingwood, as if still puzzled.

"Vish to heaven you could."

"Look here!" exclaimed Collingwood, gently. "What's up?"

Dicky sat up and favored the question with his best stare of disapprobation.

"Well, are we at St. Moritz?" he demanded.

"No," admitted Collingwood.

"Are we in Switzerland?"

"No."

"Well, where are we?"

"In Paris."

"There you are—there you are! And you've got the sublime cheek to ask me what's up!" And Dicky hurled himself back among the cushions and resumed his gloomy contemplation of the mural effects, torturing his mustache the while.

Collingwood indulged in a good-natured laugh. "Now, don't get angry, Dicky," he said, soothingly. "It's all right—only a trifling contretemps. We got on the wrong train—by mistake."

Dicky violently jerked his eyes away from the charms of garlanded cupid and stared again.

"Are you telling me that for a fact or a joke?" he demanded.

"Fact—absolute fact!" Collingwood assured him calmly. "We were kept until the last moment paying duty on Peggy's cigarettes and had to rush for the train."

"I saw you," interjected his lordship with meaning.

"Got in the one that was on the move."

"Yes—the Paris express," Ellerdine nodded. "You jumped Peggy on and sprang after her, dragging the maid with you. Very clever bit of work, my friend," he told the Cupid.

"Well, where were you?"

"In the other train—the right one—with Alice," answered Dicky, with pointed emphasis. "It was a rotten thing for you to do."

Collingwood smiled unnoted. "Leave you with Alice?" he inquired. His lordship did not smile.

"No, to leave us in the lurch like that."

"But," protested Collingwood, "I telegraphed to you to Chalons that we had got on the wrong train."

## CHAPTER IV.

"Yes, I know you did," said his lordship grimly, "but that didn't make it true. I wouldn't have gone on if Alice hadn't persuaded me that the train was running in two sections and that you should be sure to join us at Chalons."

"Well, it's all right now," concluded Collingwood, soothingly, as he sank at full length on the sofa. "So don't let's say any more about it."

"All right now, is it?" retorted Dicky, with cold irony. "Suppose Adamston hears about it—what?"

Collingwood settled himself among the cushions. "Oh, it'll be easy to invent some yarn that will satisfy him," he replied easily.

"You'll have to do it. I never could invent," said Dicky, hopelessly. "Never I should have gone in for writing if I'd been able to invent a bit. No good at it! Confound you, Colling, landing us!"

"Now, look here, Dicky," interrupted the other in reproachful tones. "I didn't think you'd cut up rough about it. I thought possibly Alice might, but not you!"

"Oh, she doesn't mind," returned Ellerdine sarcastically. "She doesn't believe folks get on the wrong train or have motor boat accidents so they can have a night off."

Collingwood sat up and his straight eyebrows came together.

"Do you mean you think I—"

he began slowly.

"No I don't," interrupted Dicky unmoved. "But what will Adamston think? He's sure to hear it. I'll bet you a fiver it is known all over London to-night."